

Cynthia Kitchens v. The Boeing Company

Case No. 2:16-cv-03723-RMG-MGB

DEFENDANT THE BOEING COMPANY'S MOTION FOR SUMMARY JUDGMENT AND SUPPORTING  
MEMORANDUM

# EXHIBIT "H"

## EXCERPTS FROM THE DEPOSITION OF RON PENTZ

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
CHARLESTON DIVISION

CYNTHIA KITCHENS,

Plaintiff,

vs.

CASE NO. 2:16-cv-03723-RMG-MGB

THE BOEING COMPANY,

Defendant.

DEPOSITION OF: RONALD J. PENTZ

DATE: August 4, 2017

TIME: 8:58 AM

LOCATION: Nexsen Pruet  
205 King Street, Suite 400  
Charleston, SC

TAKEN BY: Counsel for the Plaintiff

REPORTED BY: MARIE H. BRUEGGER, Registered  
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1 A. I have. We do this every year.

2 Q. And is that covered in your May  
3 training?

4 A. This is separate from that.

5 Q. And when did you receive the training  
6 this year? Do you remember?

7 A. It was at the very beginning of the  
8 year, January.

9 Q. What position did Ms. Kitchens hold?

10 A. She was, when she was working with me,  
11 a first-line quality manager.

12 Q. And what does a first-line quality  
13 manager do?

14 A. A first-line quality manager is a  
15 manager that leads a team of inspectors out on the  
16 shop floor and responsible for the inspection of  
17 the assembly and build-up of the airplane.

18 Q. And how long did you supervise  
19 Ms. Kitchens?

20 A. It was, if I remember correctly, about  
21 two months, maybe.

22 Q. And are you aware of why she was  
23 transferred to your area from Rocky Haskell?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Why?



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1           A.     She was transferred to my area because  
2 Rocky was on second shift. He was responsible for  
3 a very large territory, which would be  
4 aft/mid/composite fab, so he ran all the second  
5 shift. I had gotten another manager, another  
6 senior manager, on first shift. I was by myself.  
7 And typically, the third shift managers would  
8 report to the first shift managers. So upon  
9 receiving an additional senior manager on first  
10 shift, we reverted back to the first shift senior,  
11 which would have been me, Cells 30 and 40,  
12 supervising third shift.

13           Q.     And who was the other senior manager  
14 that you got on first shift?

15           A.     Kelly Henderson.

16           Q.     And during those two months that you  
17 supervised Ms. Kitchens, did she have any  
18 complaints to you about the work environment?

19           A.     I don't remember any specific  
20 complaints. I know she wasn't happy about the  
21 position on the flight line, not receiving that,  
22 and she said she was going to go find out who had  
23 the -- who received the position, but not a  
24 complaint, just a statement.

25           Q.     And what is a flight line position?

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1 Q. And what were your concerns?

2 A. Concerns with Ms. Kitchens around  
3 performance?

4 Q. Yes.

5 A. Generally, several years of low  
6 performance scores.

7 Q. So your PIP was based on her previous  
8 evaluations?

9 A. The general themes in those were, and  
10 I've also witnessed them, were communication  
11 problems. Trying to remember several other.  
12 Understanding the scope of work in the building,  
13 conflict amongst peers, written and oral  
14 communication. Those are a few that I can  
15 remember.

16 Q. And what, specifically, was the  
17 communication problem?

18 A. Communication wasn't always clear.

19 Q. Anything else?

20 A. Besides not being clear, not always at  
21 the right levels. I do remember sometimes  
22 Ms. Kitchens would elevate issues that she should  
23 be able to handle on her own or with her peers.

24 Q. And what issues specifically are you  
25 talking about that she elevated and should have

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1 been able to handle with her peers?

2 A. I think just some of the -- I don't  
3 remember specifics, but I think -- and I'd have to  
4 look, but just day-to-day stuff that any typical  
5 quality manager would run into, call board issues,  
6 employee corrective action, minor issues.

7 Q. And what is a call board issue?

8 A. I'm sorry. A call board issue is how  
9 the quality managers and the inspectors can pull  
10 up on a computer to see what type of inspections  
11 are being requested, where the inspections are at,  
12 who's logged on, who's working those inspections,  
13 what the backload is, call times. They can use it  
14 to understand if they need to move their  
15 inspectors around to different areas. At the end  
16 of the shift, you backlog what you need to turn  
17 over to the following shifts. It's one of their  
18 primary responsibilities.

19 Q. And did she have problems with  
20 particular employees regarding corrective action  
21 issues?

22 A. The last one I can remember was with  
23 two employees.

24 Q. Who were they?

25 A. I believe one was Autry Comer, and I

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1 can't remember the name of the second person.

2 Q. And did they make complaints about  
3 Ms. Kitchens's performance as a manager?

4 A. Not to me. I believe they might have  
5 had some discussions with HR, but I can't  
6 remember.

7 Q. What was your specific issue with  
8 Ms. Kitchens's understanding the scope of work?

9 A. So being on third shift, she was  
10 responsible for an entire factory. She was  
11 responsible for structures, wiring, delivery. She  
12 didn't know the technical details of all the  
13 wiring and the entire flow of the build.

14 Q. And when you say the entire flow of  
15 the build, what do you mean?

16 A. Like what specifically happens in each  
17 work area -- Cell 10, Cell 20, Cell 30, Cell 40 --  
18 and the technical understanding of how to resolve  
19 any issues that may arise.

20 Q. And other than -- you stated earlier  
21 the employee corrective action amongst her peers,  
22 but you also stated conflict amongst her peers.  
23 Was that the same issue with her employees?

24 A. She had conflict amongst her peers,  
25 and I believe I was referring to employee

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1 corrective action on her team, administering that.

2 Q. And what other peers was she having  
3 conflict with?

4 A. There's been multiple: Brent Reinig,  
5 Tracy Darnell, Dennis Iler. Those are a few that  
6 I can remember her having conflict with.

7 Q. And did you keep track of these?

8 A. I would say I could find details on it  
9 if I needed to.

10 Q. Did you document them in her employee  
11 file?

12 A. I think those are saved in emails. I  
13 mean, I only had her for like two months, so we  
14 were starting to work through issues.

15 Q. At any point in time during your  
16 employment with Boeing, have you kept a journal?

17 A. What I keep is notes, not specifically  
18 a journal.

19 Q. And what is included in those notes?

20 A. In those notes I'll usually include  
21 any sort of performance issues, and I'll usually  
22 save emails if there's performance issues.

23 Q. And what were your issues with her  
24 written and oral communications?

25 A. Very confusing. The written



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1 communications, when I'd receive them, I could not  
2 follow them, the grammar, sentence composure, just  
3 not written well enough to understand.

4 Q. Were you aware that she was seeing a  
5 leadership coach to help her with those?

6 A. Yes, ma'am.

7 Q. And had they improved any through that  
8 counseling with the leadership coach?

9 A. I can't say if they did because the  
10 first time I heard about that was several weeks  
11 before she left during one of our conversations.

12 Q. And in that two months that you  
13 supervised her, how many times could you say that  
14 you met with her?

15 A. I would estimate three times, four  
16 formal meetings.

17 Q. And did you discuss each of those  
18 areas that you had concerns regarding in those  
19 meetings?

20 A. Absolutely. Our last meeting was  
21 specifically about that.

22 Q. And in that last meeting, did you  
23 actually have the performance improvement plan  
24 prepared to give to her?

25 A. I did not.

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1 Q. When were you planning on finalizing  
2 that performance improvement plan?

3 A. It would have been in the following  
4 one or two weeks after that discussion.

5 Q. And while you were preparing to give  
6 her that one to two weeks, were you giving her the  
7 opportunity to improve those areas?

8 A. I would say there's always an  
9 opportunity to improve those areas, so yes.

10 Q. What is the purpose of a performance  
11 improvement plan?

12 A. The performance improvement plan is  
13 just as it sounds. It is a document that the  
14 manager would use to detail performance areas that  
15 need to be improved. I would review it with the  
16 employee, ensure understanding of the employee,  
17 come to an agreement on the accuracy and the  
18 expectations, and then we would both sign the  
19 performance improvement plan and execute it.

20 Q. During your time as a manager in  
21 issuing performance improvement plans, have you  
22 ever had an employee improve and not be terminated  
23 based on a PIP?

24 MS. CHERRY: Object to the form. You  
25 can answer if you can.



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1 THE WITNESS: Can you say that  
2 question one more time, please?

3 BY MS. HUNT:

4 Q. During your time as a manager in  
5 issuing performance improvement plans, have you  
6 ever had an employee improve to the point that  
7 they were not terminated?

8 MS. CHERRY: Same objection.

9 THE WITNESS: The answer to that  
10 question would be all of the previous, which would  
11 have been two, were released from the company. I  
12 would note that she was not on a performance  
13 improvement plan, and I had not reviewed it with  
14 her yet.

15 BY MS. HUNT:

16 Q. Based on that answer is you're telling  
17 me you issued two PIPs before this, and they were  
18 released?

19 A. Over the years, yes, over three years.

20 Q. Who did you discuss the performance  
21 improvement plan for Ms. Kitchens with before  
22 discussing it with her?

23 MS. CHERRY: Object to the form.

24 THE WITNESS: So I would have had a  
25 discussion with HR about it, I would have had a

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1 discussion with Keith Castleberry, and likely  
2 maybe one or two executives or M levels. I really  
3 can't remember who else.

4 BY MS. HUNT:

5 Q. Who did you discuss it with in HR?

6 A. The HRG would be LePrincess Porter.

7 (Plaintiff's Exhibit 5, Salaried Job  
8 Classifications, was marked for identification.)

9 BY MS. HUNT:

10 Q. I'm going to hand you what's been  
11 marked as Exhibit No. 5 and ask you --

12 MS. HUNT: I think I already handed  
13 you that one, right?

14 MS. CHERRY: I've got it.

15 BY MS. HUNT:

16 Q. Do you recognize that document?

17 A. I do. It's a salaried job  
18 classification of a quality manager K level.

19 Q. And was that the position that  
20 Ms. Kitchens held?

21 A. That is the title of the position that  
22 Ms. Kitchens held.

23 Q. And I'll give you a minute to look at  
24 it. Would you say those are her duties, her major  
25 tasks and additional tasks that were assigned to

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1           A.    I don't believe I had. I did review  
2   like all of the previous years' performance  
3   evaluations, but I don't think I have ever given  
4   her a formal performance evaluation.

5           Q.    Do you remember particularly what  
6   years you reviewed her evaluations?

7           A.    It would have been in likely the last  
8   three years.

9           Q.    Was there anything in any of those  
10   evaluations that stood out to you?

11          A.    Yeah. There was negative comments  
12   left by the previous senior managers. I don't  
13   remember the specifics of it, but that was, you  
14   know, something I was taking into account during  
15   the drafting of the PIP.

16                   (Plaintiff's Exhibit 8, Manager  
17   Close-Out Evaluation [TBC/CK\_1042-1047], was  
18   marked for identification.)

19   BY MS. HUNT:

20          Q.    I'm going to hand you what's been  
21   marked as Exhibit No. 8. This was provided by  
22   Boeing to us, and it's I believe the 2015, given  
23   in 2016. Do you recognize that document?

24          A.    Yes.

25          Q.    And did you review this in preparation



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1 Q. There you go. Do you recognize that  
2 email?

3 A. I do. I received this on my  
4 BlackBerry rather unexpectedly.

5 Q. And why do you say unexpectedly?

6 A. I didn't expect it.

7 Q. Do you think that she could have  
8 improved on the PIP?

9 A. I do.

10 Q. And sitting here today, why do you  
11 believe she could have improved?

12 A. Well, generally speaking, when we were  
13 having our initial conversations, she was fairly  
14 positive about working to improve performance.  
15 That's not always the case.

16 Q. And what specifically did she say that  
17 led you to believe that?

18 A. Demeanor, just, you know, speaking  
19 with -- she was speaking with her leadership  
20 coach. She was working with a leadership coach.  
21 It's kind of an indication that she's trying. She  
22 was willing to share the issues where she was  
23 having performance problems with me, open about  
24 it. So I was really optimistic that if we  
25 documented everything she was working on and

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1 worked through it together, it would definitely  
2 have been resolved.

3 Q. And what performance issues was she  
4 open about with you?

5 A. Again, it was a while ago during that  
6 conversation, I'd have to look in details, but it  
7 was the things that she was working on with her  
8 leadership coach, communication, general  
9 leadership things that all Boeing managers are  
10 evaluated against.

11 Q. Do you think you would have kept notes  
12 regarding that?

13 A. That conversation?

14 Q. Yes.

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. In the normal course if you met with  
17 an employee, did you keep notes regarding the  
18 conversation?

19 A. Generally, conversation around  
20 performance, I would keep notes.

21 Q. And was this one of those formal  
22 meetings that you talked about?

23 A. This would have been --

24 Q. Not the resignation letter, but the  
25 conversation regarding her performance issues that



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1 Q. From her medical leave.

2 A. Were there -- state that question one  
3 more time.

4 Q. When she returned from her medical  
5 leave, were there any issues with any of her  
6 employees?

7 MS. CHERRY: Object to the form.

8 THE WITNESS: I don't remember when  
9 her medical leave was, but -- and if this previous  
10 corrective action memo was before or after her  
11 leave dates.

12 BY MS. HUNT:

13 Q. I have nothing further. Answer any  
14 questions that Molly may have.

15 EXAMINATION

16 BY MS. CHERRY:

17 Q. Mr. Pentz, I've just got one. You  
18 referenced notes that you took in your meeting, or  
19 meetings, with Ms. Kitchens. Have you produced  
20 those notes in the course of this litigation?

21 A. Yes, ma'am.

22 MR. RAWL: Can I ask you one thing?

23 MS. CHERRY: Yeah. Let's take one  
24 quick break.

25 (A recess transpired.)